

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**SHIFTING GERARS PROJECT
LAWRENCE**

**INFORMANT: WILLIAM BEAULIEU
INTERVIEWER: YILDEREY ERDENER
DATE: OCTOBER 11, 1988 (TUESDAY)**

**Y = YILDEREY
W = WILLIAM**

SG-LA-T510

Today is October 11th, Tuesday, 1988. And my guest is William, I can't tell your last name. [w:
Beaulieu] Beaulieu [spells: B e a u l i e u]. Right? [W: Right] and um:

Y: Okay. So um, although I know, where were you born and when?

W: I was born January 11th, 1901.

Y: One. Where?

W: In Lawrence.

Y: In Lawrence. What street?

W: On Valley Street.

Y: Valley?

W: Valley.

Y: Yeah. And uh, so your parents were living there right?

W: My parents were immigrants.

Y: Immigrants. From where?

W: From Canada.

Y: Canada? [W: Yeah] Umhm. Do you know, when did they come? I mean uh, did they come uh (--)

W: My father came by himself. [Y: Uh huh] My mother came with the family.

Y: And then they meet, met (--)

W: Then they met, then they met in Lawrence, [Y: umhm] and they got married in Lawrence. And Valley Street, and we moved in to South Lawrence four years later.

Y: South Lawrence? [W: Yeah] Which uh, (--)

W: South on Market Street.

Y: Market? [W: Yeah] Umhm. And uh, can you tell me a little bit about your um, uh, sisters, brothers, siblings? How many?

W: To my recollection there was uh, living, I'm talking about living now. They got fourteen kids. [Y: Fourteen] Fourteen. But when I was born, I mean when I was three or four years old I had one, two, three, four sisters [Y: four sisters] and I think it's four brothers. Two, three, one, two, three, four, five. Five boys.

Y: Five boys, four sis (--)

W: And four girls that was left. They others had died before me, [unclear] before I was born. In other words there was uh, my mother told me she, she had twins, girls, and they died when I was one year old, and she was still crying about it.

Y: One year old?

W: Yeah. And I, the means from fourteen down to nine I think. It was five died before I was born.

Y: Um. You are number nine? Are you number (--)

W: I'm the number four (--) number thirteen.

Y: Number thirteen. [W: Yeah] So uh, fourteen lived (--)

W: Fourteen born.

Y: Fourteen born. [W: Yeah] How many survived?

W: They all survived for awhile. [Y: Uh huh] All I know about the twins is they died at one year old. [Y: Right, yeah] And uh, I don't know how the others died. I mean uh, (--)

Y: How many became adults I mean from fourteen?

W: That's what I say, nine.

Y: Nine. Nine, right.

W: That's what I'm trying to say.

Y: Right. Okay. And uh, so your mother, did she work at the mills with fourteen (--)

W: She worked, she worked when, before she got married. She was a weaver in the Pacific Mills.

Y: Uh huh.

W: And my father was a Blacksmith.

Y: Blacksmith, umhm.

W: On the railroad. They didn't shoe [unclear], they wasn't shoeing horses. He's on the railroad. It's just he used to forge parts through the engines and, I mean, that was his trade.

Y: Um. Yeah. And uh, so as soon as uh, the children grow up they started working at the mills?

W: Well that's fourteen, we had to help them out, we had to help the family. That's it.

Y: Right. Everyone, everyone did the same thing in those days, right?

W: That's right they had to. They had no money. [Y: Yeah] So we, we were all right. See we were three boys. And we used to go out and pick up boxes. [Y: Umhm] I remember we used to go down behind the stores. At that time everything was shipped in boxes, in wood box. [Y: Uh huh] Tonight, today it's uh, it's not wood anymore. It's uh, [pause] how would I say it? They don't transfer the boxes in wood. I mean especially the (--) We used to pick up that wood. We uh, down the uh, the paper mill right next to where we live back on Market Street. We used to go there and pick coal. They used to fire up and then they'd put the uh, they'd through the [levies?] over in the pile there. We'd wait until it's gets cold and we used to pick the coke.

Y: Do you live on Market Street today? On Market Street?

W: Today? No today.

Y: Today where do you live?

W: Now I'm living at uh, I mean uh, on Inman Street.

Y: Inman? [W: Yeah] Yeah. And uh, so (--)

W: We left Market Street, we moved to Parker Street, from Parker Street we moved to (--) I got married there. [Y: Parker Street?] I moved. I got married I was on Parker Street.

Y: Umhm. Yeah, how did you find uh, a place for eleven people, I mean nine kids, and your father and mother? Anyone else was living? grandmother, grandfather with you?

W: I don't get you.

Y: Did your grandfather or grandmother, or uncles used to live with you?

W: No.

Y: No, just the nine kids and your parents?

W: That's right. [Y: Yeah] Yeah.

Y: And then where did you go to school?

W: I went to Sacred Heart School.

Y: Sacred Heart?

W: Sacred Heart, yeah.

Y: That was elementary school?

W: That's on Broadway.

Y: Broadway, yeah. And uh, how (--) Did you graduate?

W: No. I went up to second, seventh grade. I was going to graduate, but I went to work in January. [Y: Oh, I see] And they graduated in June. [Y: Oh no] And I've always been sorry for that.

Y: Did you go to night schools later? Some people could not graduate and then they (--)

W: No, that, that (--)

Y: You not had the opportunity.

W: Didn't do that and I'm sorry for that too.

Y: Yeah. Yeah, well um, so you uh, how did you find your job?

W: I went and find and asked for it.

Y: So you went to the mill and ask?

W: I went down the wood mill, and then I went to the [unclear] room and I asked the boss for a job. [Y: Yeah] I had (--)

Y: That was the year 1915 you said? [W: That's right, 1915, January] January. What date?

W: Now what day was it?

Y: I'm kidding.

W: Wait a minute.

Y: No, it's not important.

W: It's in [unclear], because it was [unclear]. See my birthday it the 11th, and uh, January, February (--) I mean January 1st, 2nd, so it's in between the third and the eleventh. All right? [Y: Right] So uh, I think it's about the third of January, because I had to give two weeks free. [Y: Yeah, right] And I started to work on my birthday.

Y: Yeah. And so exactly three years before was the strike. January 12, 1912. [W: That's right] And you said you were eleven years old when this strike was on?

W: Twelve years old huh?

Y: Twelve?

W: 1911. No, I was thirteen years old. No, wait a minute.

Y: You said you were born in 19 what?

W: Yeah, and the strike was uh, [Y: 12] 1912. I was eleven years old.

Y: Eleven years old, right. So um, can you tell me a little bit about the strike? What did you see, what do you remember, what did you hears as an eleven year old boy?

W: I remember we crossed the bridge. There was no activities in South Lawrence.

Y: And you are living in the Valley Street at that time?

W: No, no, I was in South Lawrence. [Y: South Lawrence] Oh yeah. [Y: Umhm] See, 1912 I was, I went to school there I think it was about 1905, 05 or 06 when we moved to South Lawrence.

Y: To Parker Street?

W: No, to Market Street.

Y: Market Street, uh huh.

W: Um, Parker Street we moved right almost a year after.

Y: I see.

W: We needed a big lodging. So uh, where the hell were we?

Y: Well the uh, the strike. What do you remember about?

W: Oh yeah. The strike like all boys eleven years old, and my brothers, we crossed over the bridge and we kept on the bridge to see what was going on. [Y: Yeah] And the memories are there.

Y: What did you see? What was going on there?

W: Pushing and shoving. [Y: Uh huh] You got the cops are down there, the soldiers came in, [Y: Yeah] clear up the place. [Y: Uh huh] And we used to run like hell. [Laughs] When they come down they says, wait and wait here. And I remember we had the Oswaco Mill. My sister was a mender. [Y: Umhm] And my other sister was a burler. [Y: Umhm] And we got down there, that's between, the mill was between the river and the canal. Next to it was the uh, paper mill. Anyway, we went down there and we stood at the other side of Merrimack Street. Huh, and they, they were coming down, the whole damn bunch. They were strikers believe me. [Y: Yeah] They hooked up [unclear] from the, from the mill and they kept the strikers from crossing that bridge.

Y: That bridge is uh, on Broadway? Which bridge is this?

W: The bridge on Broadway.

Y: Yeah.

W: Where they make, they make electricity on one side and the restaurant is on this side.

Y: Oh yeah, restaurant. Yeah, what is the name of the restaurant? There a colored pictured of it.

W: Well, anyway they were coming down. The Oswaco Mill is a beautiful mill. It wasn't very old.

Y: How do you spell the name of it you know?

W: Oswoco.

Y: Oh, okay. That's an Indian name, or? [W: Huh?] How do you spell the name? [W: Me?]
Uh, the name of the mill, how does it spell? Oswaco?

W: Yeah. O-S-W-A-C-O.

Y: Uh huh. I see, Oswaco. Okay. And the strikers were coming from Merrimack Street you said?

W: From Essex, from this side of the river.

Y: Which side? The, the, um (--)

W: On this side. [Y: Yeah] Your strikers were right there, right here on this side. [Y: Uh huh]
We go down the bridge down there and they, they come down Broadway where the false bridge is.

Y: Umhm, umhm. Yeah.

W: That's where. And then there's a railroad bridge right aside of it, huh. And they had [hosest?] steam.

Y: Yeah. Hot water?

W: Bottled, boiling water. And naturally they didn't cross the bridge.

Y: They couldn't huh?

W: How could they? They going to burn them.

Y: So it was not cold water, but it was hot water?

W: That's hot water. That's what I was told. Now remember I'm the kid. I'm only eleven years old. [Y: Uh huh] But that's what they told us.

Y: And then they turned around, the strikers? [W: Huh?] Did the strikers turn around and go back?

W: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah. They went back.

Y: Uh huh. Were they singing, or what do you remember? People talk about you know, (--)

W: No, I don't remember that. [Y: You don't remember?] No, no. I remember when they were coming down and I see the hoses, but, and they told me, they told me this, that it was hot water.

Y: Yeah. You did not get any hot water?

W: [Laughing] And we, we were out in the field there and we could see the whole thing because it's a little higher, a little higher down there on Broadway. There's a little height. We could see everything from, from there. All the people that was down there looking at it.

Y: And uh, you were with two brother, two brothers you said?

W: I was two brothers with, we were three. The last ones, we were always together.

Y: Which one, what were the names of your brothers? [W: my brother?] Yeah.

W: Julian is my older brother, and Albert was my younger brother.

Y: Yeah. So you were with Albert and Julian?

W: Yeah.

Y: Were they older than you?

W: One is older. Julian is older. And uh, see, Julian is number twelve, [Y: twelve] I'm thirteen, and then my kid brother Albert is a fourteen.

Y: Fourteen. And [unclear] Julian was working at the mill at that time?

W: Hey, wait a minute. Uh, yes, yes. Yes, he was older enough.

Y: But he did not march?

W: Where the hell (--) I'm trying to figure out now. See I was born, well he wasn't working. I was eleven, he was twelve.

Y: He was twelve?

W: I thought sure he was twelve, maybe it was eleven.

Y: So uh, I uh, have a picture here somewhere.

W: That's the Pacific Mill. [Y: Yeah] Right uh, this (--)

Y: This says Washington Mills. "Strikers try to enter the mill." [W: That's right] And then they were hosed. I don't see the hose. Oh, that's the hose here.

W: See that. They used it.

Y: So did, the water?

W: Yeah. That'd be, that'd be the South Broadway?

Y: Uh, Washington Mills? Um, this is right here.

M: Oh yeah, right here. [Y: Yeah, yeah] Well we got them as it goes a very uh (--) [Y: Umhm] Yeah.

Y: Did you see another leaders at that time? Uh, [unclear], or uh (--)

M: No I didn't?

Y: You did not?

M: No. I don't (--) We used to read about them every night. [Y: Yeah] Oh yeah, yeah.

Y: You used to read in the newspaper?

M: Sure.

Y: About what they said?

M: About, about the strike. The strikers, or what happened during the day. The papers carried it.

Y: Was your father interested in that strike?

M: No, he had nothing to do with it. He was on the railroad.

Y: Because he was uh (--)

M: On the railroad.

Y: Railroad. And uh, your mother was uh, [W: at home] at home.

W: My mother was (--)

Y: So uh, how did the strike affect your family?

W: It affected, my two sister were working in the [unclear]. Then my brother, another brother there, he was working for the Merrimack, no, for the paper mill. [Y: paper mill?] Yeah, Merrimack Paper Mill. That's uh, that was right next to the [unclear], where the [unclear]. And next there's a uh, what the hells the name of that paper company?

Y: What, the International Paper Company, no? [W: What?] International Paper Company, or what(--)

W: There is an International.

Y: Anyway uh, I thought it is that one. Uh, so um, did you get, did you stand on the bread line, in the bread line?

W: No.

Y: Or any soup, kitchen (--)

W: No, not me.

Y: You got enough in your family to eat?

W: Yup. [Y: Because your] My father had a steady job.

Y: Yeah. Yeah. But it should affect the, the neighborhood somehow.

W: It could, but I don't know about that.

Y: Yeah. As a eleven years old boy you did not notice that.

W: No. I could tell you what I learned after that, but that's not what you want.

Y: Well that's good. Yeah, tell me what you heard.

W: Years, two, or three years after listening to what went on.

Y: Yeah, what, what do you remember from that?

W: Like I say, we were going to the line and see, to see the thing going on. But we wasn't interested in that. Just to see the people and what they were going to do. How they were going to do it. That's the kids mind. That's how it was. But uh (--)

Y: Yeah. I'm interested in stories that you heard afterwards, from other people, or from your father or mother, or sisters. What did you hear? Any comments, any stories?

W: Well we [clears throat], that was the thing in the day. Everyday was repetition. The people were fighting. The people wanted to get in there. They wanted something. And uh, they, they got something. [Y: Yeah] See that's, that's pure knowledge what, what I can tell you. I can't tell you anymore that is already said, already done. [Y: Right] That's uh, [unclear]. I mean you're not drilling me for any, something big, because I, I wouldn't be able to tell you that, I was eleven years old.

Y: Yeah, right.

W: That's the only thing.

Y: But you were a little boy. I mean what can you uh (--) [W: unclear] I was wondering what you understood with your uh, you know and eleven year old boy (--)

W: I understood the whole thing. [Y: You did?] But I mean boyish, boyish way, wishing to see something happen. [Y: Yeah] and I'll run like hell. [Laughs]

Y: Yeah.

W: That's right.

Y: And uh, so you started working uh, 1915 at uh, wood mill? [W: Yup] Uh, do you remember the first day you walked in?

W: Yeah, I guess so.

Y: You did?

W: I guess so! See that's why (--)

Y: Well how, how was it?

W: It's nothing. I mean it's wide open. We take the stairs. It was a nice mill. I still [unclear].

Y: What do, what do you remember from that day?

W: I went to the boss, what was it uh, Cayton. Fred Cayton. He was the boss. And I asked for a job. He says uh, you got your birth certificate? I says, yup. He says, all right, he says, come to work and see that you do, you do your business, do your job. [Y: Umhm] So we the two first weeks we didn't get a dime. That we had to learn. That's what they set for learning.

Y: Um, that was interesting, you were telling me. So two weeks they train you? That was a training period?

W: You learn the job.

Y: You learn the job, but you not get anything. [W: Nothing] Nothing. [W: No] But you worked eight hours uh, whatever hours.

W: Oh it's more than eight hours. It was fifty-four hours a week. [Voices in background]

Y: Fifty four?

W: Oh yes.

Y: How uh, fifty-four? How many hours did you work. Did you start at six in the morning? [W: That's right] Six to what?

W: Jeese, now I uh, I don't just remember. But it's fifty-four hours, because they were sixty hours with the strike. [Y: Yeah] The strike made them come down to fifty-four hours. [Y: Right] They give them half of Saturday, and that's what made it fifty-four hours.

Y: Umhm, yeah. [W: See?] Yeah.

W: So uh, after I got the two weeks in you got fifty-four hours, that's it. There were fifty-four hours anyway.

Y: What did you do?

W: Uh, bag boy. [W: Bag boy?] Bag boy. We used to put those balls in the back, they're all, the [unclear] over there. And uh, and the minute they emptied they had to put a new one in. So to put the knew one in there's skewers. You put the skewers in and they tie the two end ones, the last one and the new one, and they would put them up. We have uh, oh it must be over, over three hundred of them balls. They're all on racks. And the rack, the end come down and they go through the mule. Of course to start telling you what a mule is, I think you're going to have a lot of trouble. I don't think you'll ever understand it.

Y: I guess not, no. Yeah.

W: [Chuckles] A mule in the worsted is a carriage on wheel. You have uh, it rides, it comes out probably three yards, it's on wheels and it's a carriage. There's a cylinder. And in the cylinder there's a, there's strings. And that goes around the cylinder and the mule head make that cylinder turn. When it brings out it stretches. And when it goes in your spindles start swallowing them by putting, and it goes right around. And it goes back and forth. And if one of them breaks you got to piece it up. And that, a mule is generally twenty-five, thirty, probably forty feet [unclear].

Y: Yeah, when you started you were living on Parker Street, or? Parker? [W: Yeah] Did you walk to Woodman.?

W: Oh, you have to. [Y: Everyone huh?] [Unclear] was pretty near, you were not too far. [Y: Yeah] But uh, (--)

Y: Who walked with you? Your sister, brother together, or you walked by yourself?

W: No, I go, I was going with my brother, the older one. The young one stayed home.

Y: So your brother and you walked together back and forth? [W: Yeah, yeah] And how long did you stay as a bag boy?

W: That's the point. The minute you had to learn how to piece up, the bag boy is only the, the bag boy, he puts the big one (--) But when it comes down the string, and it's, it's twisted, it's twisted by that uh, revolving uh (--)

Y: I see. Yeah.

W: He got uh, now where was we?

Y: So uh, how long did you stay, how long did you work as bag boy?

W: I worked, I'd say, I'd say probably a year.

Y: A year?

W: Yeah. What advances you, or throws you off you got to go in there and try and piece them up. You're helping the spinner. And once you know how to piece up, then they give you a break and you're going to go higher.

Y: Higher also in pay higher?

W: Yeah.

Y: Did you get higher pay?

W: Yup.

Y: Do you remember the first year?

W: My first pay was five seventy-six a week. Fifty-four hours.

Y: Five dollars, seventy six cents.

W: And then you got promotions?

Y: Got promoted, yes. Seven dollars. Seven dollars? As what?

W: Just piecing. All you do is piece-up. And any, and oh, I forget.

Y: Well that's all right.

W: You know where the old (--) The ends come up, and when they break you have to piece them up. And that's what the piecer is, that's what you do. You get two sides and you keep them tied up. And if they break too fast you stop your car, the carriage and you piece them up by hand right away.

Y: If you cannot keep up can you stop the machine?

W: Yeah, you got to, [Y: You have to?] because it would be (--) You got, you got the piecer works with the spinner. Now you piece up, and once you get good at it they'll take you and put you on (--)

side one ends
side two begins

Y: That's all right. So uh (--)

W: Yeah, see uh, you go [unclear]. Now the mule is run by two men and a bag boy, that's three. Your spinner is the top fellow. He takes care of the mule heads, and all the mechanical. He takes care of that. [Y: Uh huh] And he has this, a piecer, all he does is piece up. [Y: Yeah] And then there's uh, the next step there for the little fellow that's the piecer [Y: Uh huh] (--)

Y: The next step is what?

W: With the piecer there. The piecer he went, he goes one step higher. [Y: Yes] They'll be two, two of these kids which graduated from piecing. Now they're going to take care of one piece, one head. There's two heads. So they got each one. [Y: Yeah] When you're a spinner you take care of the two of them, the other one does the piecing up.

Y: I was thinking is there any picture of what you did here. Uh, these are the sorters, and there's carding, [W: yeah, that's been (unclear) downstairs] and uh, dying and throwing, and uh, combing, spinning.

W: Well wait a minute. What they use, [Y: spinning, right?] that's english.

Y: English spinning?

W: Yeah, [unclear]. What I'm talking about is French spinning.

Y: French spinning.

W: Yeah. [Y: And uh] That's all the wool that comes in.

Y: Blending. [W: You see?] Carding.

W: Yeah, that's carding.

Y: Mule spinning.

W: There you are. That's, there we are. [Comment unclear]

Y: So we have the American 50th Anniversary.

W: This is the woolen. [Y: Yeah] But it's almost similar. See, what we got is French. That's what I learned. This is woolen, but it's on the same scale. The difference is that instead of balls they're on the length. And they spin much larger on this. That's why you're going to be able to

understand it. They go back and forth just like I told you. Back and forth?

Y: These are, what is it called? The mule? What goes back and forth? How do you call that part which goes (--)

W: We [unclear] mule handler, a mule handler. [Y: All right] The gears, those are the gears that shifts all by themselves. The mule head changes over, [Y: umhm] and then the carriage, they pull the carriage in. I mean the mechanical part of it. See the wheels. [Y: Right] That goes in and then when that goes in that lines all of that wool, it winds it on that bobbin. [Y: I see, okay] He comes down here now, as soon as he gets here this starts going the other way. So it puts itself right in and then it starts another one, pulls it up and it winds it around there all the time.

Y: Umhm. That is French? What you did was French?

W: What I do is French.

Y: French spinning, French drawing?

W: French spinning.

Y: And this is just uh, this is not French spinning here?

W: No, no. Well I mean uh, it's spinning, but it's not on the same grade, that's all I'm saying. They put these up on uh, this is wood. What we use is tubes. [Y: Tubes?] Tubes. But this is to make you understand the mechanical works of it.

Y: So we are on page 36 of the, of the 50TH Annual Report of American Woolen Company, put a magazine out and we are on page 36. There's a picture and that is, he's explaining how it works. Okay, I think I understood a little better. Um (--)

W: But uh, I, see this is a woolen, woolen mule, woolen mules. Everything is the same outside of uh, it makes it much better for blankets and that stuff, see. The ends are big. But the works is the same thing. It comes out here and then it winds in. It comes out, it winds in. [Y: Right] Now if one of those ends there breaks, you got to get a hold of it and tie it up. Sometimes you get bad work, it breaks, you work like hell.

Y: Yeah. So uh, that was the uh (--)

W: Good, I'm glad to see that though.

Y: Yeah? [W: Yeah] I can make a copy for you if you want.

W: Oh, but I mean you wouldn't believe. I was, I made a trip down to Lake Saint John, Canada. [Y: To see that?] No. I seen that much here. But I seen one down there. And I almost, I almost crocked. So I started working on it. [Y: Right] The guy says, you want a job? [Laughs]

Y: So how long did you work here? How long did you hold that job? [W: that job, I uh]
When did you change to another one, or did you work all the time what you described?

W: I went to the top and I stayed there. In other words I went spinning. [Y: Yeah] And I, I took care of my two mules. And I never wanted it to be a section hand, and a second hand, (--)

Y: You did not want to? [W: Huh] You did not want to be a section hand?

W: I wouldn't want to be a section hand.

Y: No? Why not?

W: It's too much, you know, they used to push these kids, [unclear] do your work [unclear] work. That's why I didn't care for it. I was making just as much as they did.

Y: Yeah. And when you started in 1915, that was uh, one year ago World War I started. Did you, as a kid did you realize that?

W: Absolutely.

Y: You did? How, why?

W: Hell, I got a walking slip. It was almost over then. My brother went to war. [Y: He did]
Two brothers.

Y: Did they return?

W: Yeah, both. One returned with gas. He was all gassed up. It was years that he suffered. Yeah. He's a brother, he worked in the Pacific, I mean in the paper mill. That's the champion paper.

Y: Champion paper, yeah. And how did uh, do you think, how did the war affect the mills?

W: It affected them. Well they had to put in people to work. That's why it affected them. The fellows that went into the army, they were pulling them out by the dozen. You had your walking slip and you got to go. That's the law.

Y: I mean did you work longer hours, or uh, or was it easier to find your job because there was not people around?

W: Absolutely. Absolutely. The women wasn't going to work anyways.

Y: Yeah. And uh, so uh, what was the age to go to the war? I mean you were uh, fourteen.

W: Oh no, I was, that's 1918 the war.

Y: Well it started in 1914.

W: Yeah, but like I say, I just missed it. See what I mean? Every year they used to, you were coming in behind. [Y: Right, uh huh] See. [Unclear]

Y: In those days (--)

W: Even my brother who was a year older than me, he didn't go either, because it was, you know, they take so many men. But the war, the war ends and they ain't going to send any more up. That's it. My brother [unclear]. I missed that and I missed the same thing on the second world war. [Y: Why?] I was one year too late, too old. [Y: Too old?] Yeah!

Y: And uh, you know, you were a little kid uh, fourteen years old, started working. And you start making contribution for the family. Did you, did your um, um, how should I say, did your father and mother treat you differently because you were making money, contributing to the family budget? Did you feel somewhat important in the family?

W: It was a, it's a duty, that's what it was. There's no medal. [Y: Yeah] Mother grooved us to see that she done her part. She worked like hell and then everything else. And they got us grooved into that. In other words we owe it to them. I wouldn't say that today, you know that. The kid will never say that today. I owe my parents anything, no.

Y: Yeah. Well then how important uh, how important was that job, the spinning room to you? Was it uh, was it important? Obviously so huh?

W: Absolutely. Well that's bread and butter.

Y: Bread and butter?

W: Your wages. [Y: Yeah] There was [unclear] I was a joiner. I was the middleman joiner. That was (--). There was piecers, joiners and spinners.

Y: Uh huh. And so you went in the morning, I guess early in the morning to work? And then you came back. What did you do uh, after work? I mean how, you were a kid. How did you have fun?

W: Well see, we'd go out and go dancing man!

Y: Did you go dancing really?

W: Absolutely!

Y: At the age of fourteen?

W: No, fifteen.

Y: Fifteen?

W: Yeah, yes.

Y: Where did you go?

W: Down the Truell Hall. [Y: What hall?] Truell.

Y: Where is this?

W: Uh, on the corner Amesbury and Essex there used to be the Lawrence Gas Company on the corner. [Y: Uh huh] And then next door, downstairs.

Y: How do you spell the name of the, what hall? [W: Huh?] How do you spell the name of the dancing place? The name of the place you went dancing? You said something hall.

W: Dance hall.

Y: Dance hall? And uh, um (--)

W: Hey, am I boring you?

Y: No, this is interesting. I think it is interesting. Uh, so you went after work, or weekends?

W: Weekends also. Oh sure. [Y: Also?] Sure. Well we go bowling. [W: Bowling?] Well, bowling alley, sure.

Y: Yeah? And uh, did you go with your brother, or with girls to dancing?

W: My brothers, we'd go together, my older brother. Sure.

Y: Could you have picked up girls at that time?

W: No, no. [Y: Huh?] Wait a minute.

Y: No, I mean was it possible in those days to (--)

W: Absolutely, that's the only place you could pick them up. You couldn't pick up a girl no where else.

Y: Yeah. What kind of dances were in fashion in those days? Charleston?

W: Fox Trott. [Y: Fox Trott?] Yeah huh. Waltz.

Y: Waltz, yeah. Waltz, right. What about Polka and so.

W: They had some of that too, yeah. [Y: Yeah?] Yeah, a little of that.

Y: Uh huh. Can you tell me other places you went dancing? I mean uh, I understand there were uh (--)

W: You wanted to know the name of the Truell Hall. T-R-U-E-L-L, Truell Hall.

Y: Oh, that was that.

W: That's where the dance was.

Y: It was on Ames, Amesbury Street you say? Where was that located?

W: On Essex Street.

Y: Essex Street. Were there other places like that, dancing?

W: There was another one uh, a man and a woman that run that, apprentice. You want to learn how to dance. We used to go to, I forget the name.

Y: But there were other places on Essex Street.

W: Oh sure. Oh sure there was (--)

Y: Well what about Broadway Street?

W: Broadway? Yes, there was one on the corner of Lowell street.

Y: Lowell Street?

W: Yeah.

Y: And then some people said there were some place in New Hampshire. d

W: Oh yeah, yeah, Merrimack Park.

Y: Merrimack Park?

W: And there was another one before Merrimack Park. There was two. I forget the name of the one. It's closer to Lawrence.

Y: Yeah. But weren't you tired after working at the mill ten hours, or eight hours?

W: That didn't matter. [Laughs]

Y: You were young, right?

W: That's right. Young.

Y: And uh (--)

W: And I love fun.

Y: Yeah. So weekends(--)

W: Weekends, Saturday mornings we go bowling. Saturday afternoon we go dancing, and (--)

Y: Did you have money to spend? I mean um,

W: Oh we did. It didn't cost that much. A dollar carried us pretty far. But remember he's only getting how much?

Y: You said seven dollars later.

W: Well I said that when it started it was five dollars and seventy-six, and then we went to seven dollars. [Y: Yeah] And then I went joining, that gives me a little more. I think it's about eleven dollars a week. Fifty-four hours.

Y: Um, yeah. And uh, when you got your pay, did you bring home and give it to your father or mother, or you, how did, how, what happened?

W: I gave my mother the money.

Y: You gave the money your mother?

W: And then she give me spending money?

Y: Yeah. But that was common, everyone, I hear that from other people. You know, you are not the only one. [W: That's right] And uh, so how long does it, how long did it continue like that?

W: Until you could find a girl and you wanted, you love her, you're going to have some money. So you try all you want, all you can to convince your parents to put you one board.

Y: Umhm, yeah.

W: So, which means I will not give you my money anymore. I'll pay you rent. I'll pay you board. [Y: Right] See what I mean? So instead off probably having two or three dollars, that gives you about six or seven. [Y: Yeah] Hey, you got to pay your board anyway, you know what I mean?

Y: But after you got married did you move out, or you stayed in your, with your family?

W: Oh, I moved out.

Y: Moved out? [W: Sure] Yeah. And in those days, 19 um (--)

W: My brother took over the parents. That was the way it was then. Today (--)

Y: He did what?

W: My brother took over my parents.

Y: Yeah. What does it mean?

W: It means that he's taking responsibility for my father and mother. He had to take care of them.

Y: The youngest one?

W: No, the uh, [Y: number uh] the one who came from the army. [Unclear] [Y: Uh huh, yeah] You got uh, you got to save your money to get married. That's all there is to it.

Y: Right. And in 19 uh, we are talking about 1916, 17, 18. I mean uh, when you went to dance. [W: Oh sure] What, what did you do with the girl? Could you go to sleep with her?

W: The girl? [Y: Yeah] She'd go home. We only went dancing, we didn't go beyond dates.

Y: I mean today you know, things have changed. So I'm (--)

W: That's all, that's what I'm telling you.

Y: Yeah. So you just dance and have fun. Did you see her again, uh?

W: Oh sure, we were all friends.

Y: Yeah.

W: I'd go home with my friend. I had a friend. [Y: Right] We all had some fun.

Y: Could you date girls from other nationalities?

W: What did you say?

Y: Could you date girls from other nationalities?

W: Absolutely. Yup.

Y: Polish, Lithuanians.

W: Absolutely. My mother never crabbed about that.

Y: Yeah, because some people [W: that's right, that's right] stick together, and some people did not bother with other uh (--) So but at the end did you marry (--)

W: I married a French girl, but that [Y: there you are] doesn't mean (--) I only knew her, oh let's see. Less than a year and I married her.

Y: Less than a year? Yeah. How did you meet her?

W: She uh, she came from Canada. She was Canadian. And uh, she went and take care of my sister's kids, and that's where I met her. And I knew I was going to marry her. I come damn near married a Polish girl, a Lithuanian girl, but it just happened that uh (--)

Y: Yeah. What was her name?

W: And I'm married 53 years with her.

Y: Is she alive?

W: She died [Y: she died?] after fifty-three years.

Y: What uh, what was her name?

W: ALice. [Y: Alice?] Alice.

Y: Yeah. So you married then nineteen uh, twenty, twenties?

W: I married in 1927.

Y: 27. So you were twenty-six years old huh?

W: Yeah.

Y: And then you moved out from your parent's house?

W: Yeah, sure.

Y: To where? To what (--)

W: Oh jeese, we changed, we changed tenement at least six times [Y: yeah] before we got settled down right. We bought old furniture from a person that died. The woman died and the man broke up, so we bought the whole thing. [Y: Yeah] I don't know how much I paid, two hundred dollars, something like that.

Y: Did she, did your wife work at the mills? [W: Yeah] Which one?

W: She worked in the Pacific and she worked in the wood mill, no, Ayer Mill.

Y: Ayer Mill? But she was babysitting before? She was taking (--)

W: When she came here she had nobody. My sister wanted a, wanted her. So they, they settled on a price. She took care of the two kids, my sister. [Y: Yeah] And I used to go down and give her a hand once in awhile.

Y: I should ask you uh, you know in those days there, not like today, there were, there are so many kindergarten and child care. What did people do? I mean how did people like your wife took care of the children of your sister. What did other people do? I mean uh, how did they take care of their children while they were working at the mill?

W: I don't know.

Y: You don't know? [W: No] Yeah. And uh, anyway, so did you have children? After you got married did you have children?

W: Oh yeah.

Y: How many?

W: Three. [Y: Three?] Two died, I got just one left. I got my first baby, two years later a second, I lost them by miscarriage. And then two years later, still born. I'm not the most (--) I don't want to even think about it. So I get my, all my brothers, my oldest and my youngest yet. He's sixty, sixty-two.

Y: So you have one child?

W: One child.

Y: What is his name?

W: Marcel.

Y: Marcel?

W: Yeah.

Y: Yeah. Is he around here in Lawrence?

W: No, he is in New York. [Y: New York?] Yeah, he's quite high in General Electric.

Y: Is he engineer? What is he doing?

W: He's computer.

Y: Computer person.

W: Yeah, yeah. He's [long pause] certified accountant. He gets computer and he's certified accountant.

Y: Certified Account?

W: Yeah, he's certified account. And uh, he's going to marry this girl. The girl was younger, oldest girl. He's going to marry her next month. I'll probably have to go(--) [Y: To New York?] Yeah.

Y: And uh, so when you were working at wood mill, you said you stayed there until they closed down.

W: No. [Y: No?] No.

Y: Where did you go from wood mill?

W: I went to the Shawsheen. [Y: Shawsheen?] It's the same company.

Y: Yeah, American Woolen Company. When was the (--)

W: And I stayed there. So it's twenty, 1924 I think I left wood mill to go to [Y: Shawsheen?] Shawsheen.

Y: And then uh, you stayed there?

W: Oh yeah. [Y: for the rest] Until they threw me out. [Y: Until what?] Until they threw me out.

Y: When was that? 1940, 50 (--)

W: 1952. They just opened the door and they said, we don't need you no more.

Y: Yeah.

W: Thank you. They never give me a dime.

Y: They did not?

W: They didn't give a dime. You were through! They didn't owe you nothing.

Y: What did you do?

W: I got another job, that's all.

Y: What kind of job. I mean after spending uh (--)

W: That's right.

Y: Thirty-five years, [W: that's right] you were out. So how did you (--)

W: What can I say. I ain't got no contract with them? And the union didn't get, didn't get anything out of striking. I walked the picket line at Shawsheen on two occasions.

Y: What happened then?

W: What happened? We lost. Oh, they gave them permission to collect dues inside the building, but they didn't do nothing. So they opened the door for you and say, go home, I'm done.

Y: So what, how did you decide what to do? Some people moved out, some people did other thing. How did you make your decision what do to?

W: Find a job. So I left and I went right down to the governor.

Y: To where?

W: To the governor. [Y: Governor?] Yeah. [Y: Massachusetts governor?] That's right.

Y: Who was the governor at that time?

W: I forget the damn name.

Y: Anyway. [W: Huh? In '52] Uh huh.

W: And uh, he gave me a slip to go to work.

Y: He gave you a slip?

W: Yeah, and I went to work.

Y: Why did you go to governor, to the governor?

W: Because, because I knew the man!

Y: Oh you knew him?

W: Sure.

Y: So you went to Boston to see him, [W: absolutely] and you told him the situation.

W: I told him my story and I got a job. It took uh, oh, probably a month before I got the paper, but I got it.

Y: Where did you go then?

W: I went uh, I could have gone either Lynn, or the reform school.

Y: Uh huh, reform school?

W: Yeah, right here in (--) Well I took the reform school. I didn't want (--) I'd got more money in Lynn, but I'd have to travel twenty, twenty-two miles.

Y: You say it is reform school? [W: Yeah] What do they do? I mean what was your job?

W: To take care of the kids. [Y: Yeah] It's a reform school. It's a jail.

Y: Yeah, how old were the kids?

W: Up to fourteen? [Y: Fourteen?] Up to fourteen. Yes, I had some six, seven, eight, nine, I had ages.

Y: Umhm. And uh, I mean how can you take care of them. What did you do?

W: Took care of them?

Y: Did you (--)

W: When there's school there, when there's school, you lift (--) Six o'clock [unclear] take them out of bed. Get them (--)

END OF TAPE